

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T CAIRO 12564

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EG, LE
SUBJ: GOE PERCEPTION OF LEBANON

SUMMARY. FAHMY'S SENIOR AIDE IS RESOLUTELY OPTIMISTIC ON LEBANON.
PEERING THROUGH CRIMSON GLASSES, HE SEES JUMBLATTT AS "REALISTIC"
AND CHAMOUN AS WANING STAR. GOE/SARG RAPPROCHMENT NOT IN OFFING,
BUT SARG SEEMS TO HAVE DECIDED TO LET FAHMY HELP IN LEBANON.

1. CURRENT VISIT TO CAIRO BY NEW PUBLIC AFFAIRS ADVISER SHERMAN
PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY FOR UNINTERRUPTED HOUR MEETING WITH OLD
FRIEND, FAHMY'S CHEF DE CANINET AL-BAZ. LATTER HAS BEEN
INITIMATLY INVOLVED WITH FLURRY OF LEBANESE CONSULTATIONS.
THIS WEEK AND HIS VIEWS REPRESENT CURRENT MFA ASSESSMENTS.

2. TAKING USUAL OPTIMISTIC MFA TACK, AL-BAZ THOUGHT "TIME IS
RIPE" FOR LEBANESE SETTLEMENT. OBSTACLES CAN BE

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OVERCOME:

A. CHAMOUN. ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHAMOUN APPOINTMENT AS ACTING PRIMIN WAS SURPRISE TO ALL IN CAIRO. GEMAYEL HAD BEEN SENT BACK TO BEIRUT EARLIER THAN PLANNED TO DEAL WITH SITUATION. (IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE, MINSTATE RIAD CONFIRMED ANNOUNCEMENT HAD BEEN UNEXPECTED AND UNWELCOME, AND SPECULATED CHAMOUN SEEKS TORPEDO SHTURA MEETING AND/OR SARKIS INSTALLATION.) IMPLICIT IN AL-BAZ'S REMARKS WAS LONG HELD GOE VIEW THAT CHAMOUN IS INCORRIGIBLE. HE MUST BE "MUZZLED" ASAP. IN LONG RUN, AL-BAZ PURSUED, CHAMOUN WILL FIND HIS POPULARITY DROPPING OFF STEEPLY (AS NLP ADHERENTS SHIFT TO KATA'IB) BECAUSE MARONITE COMMUNITY IS SICK OF FIGHTING AND IS GRATEFUL TO GEMAYEL FOR SAVING CHRISTIAN BACON (BY BEARING BURDEN OF FIGHTING AND CIVIL ADMINISTRATION). CHAMOUN'S INFLUENCE WILL WANE, IF NOT TO INSIGNIFICANCE, AT LEAST TO SEPARATED AND RELATIVELY POWERLESS ENCLAVES. ALL THIS ISTRUE DESPITE HEADY MOOD OF MARONITES AS THEY FORCEFULLY ARTICULATE THEIR MARONITISM.

B. JUMBLATT. WITH LITTLE OR NO HELP FROM SOVIETS OR ANYONE ELSE, JUMBLATT IS WEAK AND KNOWS IT. SINCE HE IS A "REALISTIC POLITICIAN" (SIC), HE IS READY FOR ACCOMMODATION. FURTHER, EGYPTIANS RETAIN THEIR BELIEF IN HIM AS THE ONLY GENUINE REFORMER ON THE SCENE. U.S. VIEW THAT HE IS DANGEROUS LEFTIST IS SHORTSIGHTED.

C. PLO. ARAFAT LIKELY TO BE ABLE TO HOLD ON, THOUGH PLO HEADS WILL ROLL WHEN SITUATION SIMMERS DOWN, SINCE PALESTINIANS BELIEVE THEIR LEADERS SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP THEM OUT OF THE SHOOTING, OR AT LEAST HAVE AVOIDED TAKING SIDES IN THE FIGHTING. PLO OBVIOUSLY EAGER END THE WAR AS THEY CAN ONLY GET WEAKER. ARAFAT HAS PROVIDED GOE WITH PARAMETERS OF HIS CONDITIONS FOR SETTLEMENT, AND THESE ARE BEING "NEGOTIATED" BY GOE (PRESUMABLY WITH LEBANESE PARTIES) RIGHT NOW.

D. SYRIA. ONLY ON SUBJECT OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS WAS AL-BAZ MORE SOMBER. SYRIAN FACTOR CANNOT BE EVALUATED BECAUSE IT IS "VARIABLE." IN REPLY TO QUESTION, HE AGREED THAT SINCE LEBANESE LEADERS HAD RECEIVED SARG ACQUIESCENCE TO
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MMAKE TRIP TO EGYPT, MFA ASSUMES THAT DAMASCUS (A) IS SERIOUS ABOUT PUSH TO GET SETTLEMENT UNDERWAY IMMEDIATELY, (2) HAS MADE DECISION THAT IT NEEDS HELP TO DO SO, AND (3) IS THEREFORE WILLING ALLOW GOE PLAY A ROLE. SYRIANS WILL, OF COURSE, NOT BE ASKED TO WITHDRAW RIGHT AWAY AND WILL HAVE CRUCIAL ROLE IN ASF.

2. ASKED WHO WILL EMERGE ON TOP AFTER SETTLEMENT, AL-BAZ

LISTED JUMBLATT AND GEMAYEL, BUT SAID IT TOO EARLY TO PINPOINT
LIKELY SUNNI LEADER, TAQI AL-DIN AL-SULH MAY BE SARKIS'
PRIMIN.

3. ON OTHER SUBJECT, AL-BAZ MADE SPECIAL POINT OF REITERATING
GOE'S STRONGLY-HELD VIEW OF HUSAIN'S "PROPER" PLACE IN
ISRAELI SETTLEMENT: USG MUST RID ITSELF OF ILLUSIONS
ABOUT HUSAI. AT PEACE TABLE, HE SHOULD REPRESENT HKJ,
A CONFRONTATION COUNTRY; PLO WILL HANDLE PALESTINIANS.

3. COMMENT: AL-BAZ IS SHREWD, INFORMED, AND FRANK. THE
SELF-DELUSION WE PERCIEVE IN HIS ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION
IS AWESOME, BUT NTO TOO SURPRISING, SINCE IT IS BASED ON
AN ABSOLUTE AND GENUINE BELIEF THAT LEBANESE (OR VIRTUALLY
ANY OTHER ARAB) PROBLEM WILL BE SOLVED ONLYYY WHEN DISPUTANTS
GET AROUND TO ASKING FOR EGYPTIAN HELP. MFA APPARENTLY
BELIEVES THIS TIME HAS COME. KEY FACTOR, WE BELIEVE, IS
THAT, JUDGING FROM EXTERNAL EVIDENCE, AL-BAZ IS RIGHT WHEN
HE SAYS SARG HAS MADE DECISION THAT IT NEEDS HELP AND IS
TACITLY WILLING ACCEPT IT FROM EGYPTIANS. HE DID NOT SUGGEST
THAT OPEN SARG/GOE RAPPROCHMENT IN THE OFFING OR EVEN LIKELY.
MINSTATE RIAD WAS MORE EXPLICIT TO CHARGE ON THIS POINT,
SAYING HE HAD NO INDICATION OF A SARG DESIRE TO MEND FENCES,
NOTING ISHRIN'S ANTI-SADAT, ANTI-SINAI II EDITORIAL OF
YESTERDAY (DAMASCUS 6189). NEVERTHELESS, JUDGING FROM
AL-BAZ'S REMARKS, GOE APPARS INTENT ON ALL-OUT EFFORT
HELP SETTLEMENT ALONG IN THESE CRUCIAL DAYS BEFORE SARKIS
INSTALLATION, EVEN THOUGH SYRIA LIKELY
GET LION'S SHARE OF CREDIT.

4. GENERAL COMMENT ON HOW GOE MIGHT HELP IN LEBANON FOLLOWS
BY SEPTTEL.
MATTHEWS

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